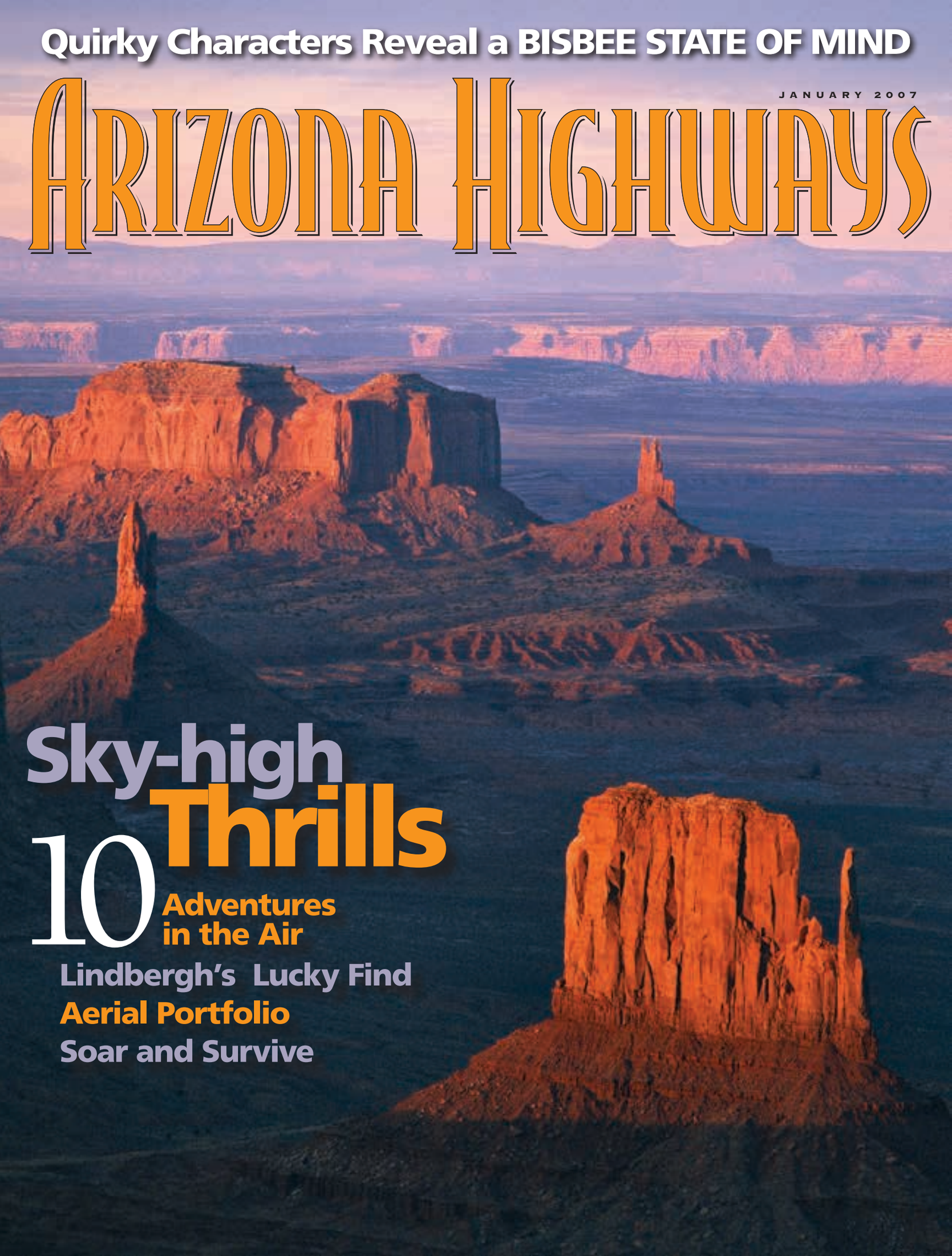
Quirky Characters Reveal a BISBEE STATE OF MIND

# Arizona Highways

JANUARY 2007



## Sky-high Thrills

10 Adventures in the Air

Lindbergh's Lucky Find

Aerial Portfolio

Soar and Survive

# High Frontier

## Adventures in the Arizona Air



**FLIER'S VIEW** Ponderosa pine trees poke through a thick cobweb of morning fog in the Coconino National Forest, north of Sedona. See aerial portfolio, page 22. ADRIEL HEISEY

■ To order a print of this photograph, see information on opposite page.

**FRONT COVER** Monument Valley's earthbound buttes appear in a dramatically different light when captured from an airborne vantage point in an evening sky. See portfolio, page 22. ADRIEL HEISEY

■ To order a print of this photograph, see information on opposite page.

**BACK COVER** Bisbee waitress Kristen Glover serves up a hot cup of copper-town character at Dot's Diner. See story, page 34. DAVID ZICKL

## Departments



## online arizonahighways.com

Soar, fly, drift and glide through the skies above our beautiful state this month. Whether by helicopter, biplane, hot air balloon, glider or with a parachute strapped to your back, get a bird's-eye view of Arizona at arizonahigways.com. Click on our January "Trip Planner" for a comprehensive list of Arizona Air Tours.

**HUMOR** Our writer creates a new travel destination.

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# dear editor

editor@arizonahighways.com


### October Issue: Wonderful or Disappointing?

Wow, you've outdone yourselves this time; the October 2006 issue was fantastic! What a great project for those lucky writers and photographers to undertake. Thanks so much for the inspiration and joy. I didn't know the magazine could get any better than it already was!

*—Diana Minton, Arcata, CA*

### Too Many People Pictures

I was really looking forward to the expanded October 2006 issue, but it arrived today and I am extremely disappointed. Most of the pictures were of people, not of the beautiful state of Arizona. Most of them could have been taken anywhere. And where you do have scenery as a background, as often as not, it is out of focus. I would have thrown it away except that I would not therefore have had a complete set for the year. Please return to the format that made this magazine great in the first place.

*—Dr. Harold A. Widdison, Flagstaff*

Yikes. October did indeed include more people pictures, since that helped capture Arizona's great diversity. Never fear, we're still hooked on landscapes. We also had printing press problems with the color in the issue. Fortunately, we've fixed that problem. —Peter Aleshire, Editor

### Right Up There With *Cattleman*

The October 2006 issue was swell; so glad I "re-upped" for another three years and didn't miss it. As a matter of fact, we've been getting *Arizona Highways* for some 20 or 25 years. Every issue. "Mama," my wife of 51 years, and I love Arizona. But we belong here in Oklahoma at our Coyote Gulch Ranch. It's small, but to us it's as grand as the Grand Canyon. I am professor emeritus, agricultural communications/agricultural education, Oklahoma State University. I think you're doing a most wonderful job in the captain's chair. *Arizona Highways* is the nation's best magazine. (I would have to say the *Oklahoma Cattleman* magazine is right up there, too.)

*—Bob Reisbeck, Stillwater, OK*

We're flattered to stack up to *Cattleman,* especially in the eyes of an ag prof. —Ed.

### Who Pays the Bills?

*Arizona Highways* is owned by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), so does that mean tax money pays to publish this magazine? I wouldn't imagine the subscription fees alone would cover all the work and salaries needed to put out your fine magazine.

*—Gordon Hugh, Gilbert*

Great question. ADOT does own the magazine, but we don't spend any taxpayer money. Subscriptions and the sale of books, calendars and other items underwrite our costs. We struggle sometimes, but remain entirely self-supporting. —Ed.

### Remembering Dad

Thank you and writer Kathryn Eastlick for the "Along the Way" ("Rediscovering Dad at Hi Jolly's Tomb," August '06). I shed a tear as it reminded me of my own father who died in 1996. Not a day goes by, especially now that I have sons, that I don't think about sharing something with him. But it had been quite a while since I recalled traveling in the car throughout Arizona and listening to my father—who was a history buff, especially Arizona history (my sister and I are third-generation Arizonans)—tell a story about this mountain range or that pass. My sister and I would roll our eyes. As an adult, I find myself regaling my kids with the history of Arizona as we travel through our wonderful state, and it was great to be reminded about where this knowledge came from. My only wish is that he was here to share them with me, my sons and my sister's daughters.

*—Kimberly Currier McAdams, Gilbert*

I lost my dad awhile back, and I know exactly what you mean. In my case, he taught me to notice birds, so every time a noteworthy bird flits past, I want to turn and point it out to him. I am happy that the story was a comfort and a reminder. —Ed.

**online** **For more letters, see arizonahighways.com (Click on "Letters to the Editor").**


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**TRAINING PILOTS**
**An F-16 makes a high-speed turn in the clear skies over Sedona. All the F-16 pilots in the Air Force undergo their six months of advanced fighter training at Luke Air Force Base.**
**COURTESY U.S. AIR FORCE**

# all who wander

by Peter Aleshire, editor

# Wild Blue Yonder

## Viper pilots hurtle along just one wrong move from disaster

LT. COL. BOB EGAN, better known as "Festus" to the brave, raw recruits he turns into honest-to-God fighter pilots at Luke Air Force Base in Glendale, is cruising along happily at 500 feet and 500 knots in his 3,600th hour in the air, cockpit time that cost the taxpayers of the nation he has spent his life defending roughly $18 million.

Lean, mild and steel-tempered, Egan exudes command so effortlessly that he can make everyone in the room lean forward just by lowering his voice. An instructor at the air base that trains all the nation's regular Air Force F-16 pilots, he's the latest in a long line of airmen who have taken advantage of the desert's empty skies and perfect weather to train generations of fliers. The influx of pilots during World War II introduced so many young people to Arizona that it laid the foundation for the postwar population boom that followed.

Suddenly, something goes violently wrong with Egan's F-16, the lithe, lethal fighter jet pilots call the Viper. For 30 years, the F-16 has served as the most nimble, flexible jet on the front lines of the nation's defense. Now the 25,000 pounds of thrust blasting out the back of his bomb-fitted jet packed with 11,000 pounds of explosive fuel devotes itself to shaking apart the arrow-sleek jet.

With the jet rattling so violently he can't read the displays and the ground a fraction of one wrong move away, Egan reacts instantly to point the nose up as the ravenous engine dies in a great gout of flame. Still moving at 650 mph, the dying F-16 turns its rapier tip to the heavens and on sheer momentum rises to 6,800 feet as it slows to 230 miles an hour. Distantly, Egan can hear his wingman shouting into the radio that 100-foot-long jets of flame are blasting out the back of Egan's aircraft. So Egan pulls the big, rubber-coated, yellow-handled ejection seat lever.

"I pulled the handle—and I remember thinking, *Why am I not getting out of this airplane*? So I looked back down at the handle and suddenly I'm out. There's this violent rush of wind—like a hurricane until you're in the chute, then you're coming down and it's completely quiet. I never did see what happened to the plane," says Egan, one of the most experienced F-16 pilots in the world.

The seven-minute drift to the ground is the worst. "It seemed like an eternity. I'm afraid of heights," he says.

That was one of some 23 crashes at Luke in recent years. Six were due to pilot error—including the death of a veteran colonel who became disoriented and flew into the ground. One was the result of a turkey vulture flying into the air intake. The rest stemmed from mechanical failures in the aging jets. Most crashes took place over 2.7 million-acre Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range some 60 miles south of Luke, which provides the empty air space needed to train fighter pilots. Ironically, that same desert shelters a struggling herd of endangered Sonoran pronghorn antelopes.

"I can no longer say that I've had as many landings as takeoffs," jokes Egan, whose 19 years in the Air Force included a stint dodging missiles over Bosnia. On his first mission there, he dodged one missile then watched a second explode just off his wing. Born on an air base, he always yearned to fly. After a stint as an engineer, he yielded to his fate.

"You can't live without it. Love is not too strong a word. It's my mistress—its looks, its capability. It's like sitting on the front of an arrow."

The training crash over the desert was the closest Egan came to dying for his country.

Fortunately, he used that experience to sharpen his demands as a trainer. Which could explain why the thousands of pilots trained at Luke have not lost a dogfight since the Vietnam War.

I got to know Egan while working on *Eye of the Viper*, a book about the six-month process of turning 13 raw pilots into fighter jocks. I found myself thinking of him often, as we prepared this special issue on having fun in the sky over Arizona.

After all, one reason our air space remains free is that they're out there every day, breaking the sound barrier—with the yellow handle of the ejection seat close at hand.

editor@arizonahighways.com

by Peter Ensenberger, director of photography, photodirector@arizonahighways.com

# Flight of Fancy Turns Into Magic Carpet Ride

**TRAVELING FIRST CLASS** Adriel Heisey designed and fabricated a fiberglass camera pod and pilot seat for his homebuilt Kolb TwinStar airplane. This month's portfolio, "Raw Wonder," beginning on page 22, showcases Heisey's breathtaking aerial artistry. ADRIEL HEISEY

ADRIEL HEISEY CAN turn a routine airplane flight into a magic-carpet ride. He's a photographer with wings, roaming Arizona skies with one eye on the altimeter and the other on the magical interplay of landscape and light unfolding below.

Clutching his medium-format camera in both hands, control stick strapped to his leg and both feet on the rudder pedals, he simultaneously functions as photographer, navigator, flight engineer and chief mechanic of his homebuilt airplane. Multitasking comes with the territory. "While I'm shooting, the man/machine interface is so smooth that I usually don't even think about it. The plane just moves naturally where I need it to be," Heisey says.

Hold the jokes about flying lawnmowers. His is a serious aircraft. "The airplane is not an ultralight by the FAA's definition," Heisey says. "It produces 100 horsepower at full throttle, and has taken me over Hawaii's, Arizona's and Colorado's highest mountains."

For Heisey, photography and aviation intertwine. Wings provide him a lofty perspective from which to observe our world. "I am drawn to see the Earth from above because in doing so I often have an experience I can only describe as communion with the connectedness of all things," he says. "I feel how everything exists simultaneously because I can see all at once so many things which, when encountered at ground level, seem disparate and singular."

For a guy who spends so much time in the air, Heisey remains deeply connected to the land. He's especially drawn to the sculptured landscapes of the Navajo Indian Reservation in northeastern Arizona. So strong is his attraction to its monolithic landforms that Heisey and his wife, Holly, lived on the reservation for many years. They recently relocated to Montrose, Colorado.

"The chaotic geometry fascinates my eye, and the mysteries of their formation tantalize my mind," Heisey says. "These otherworldly wilds are the perfect antidote to the monotony of modern civilization. For that reason, I am a passionate advocate for their protection, and regard my photography as part of the larger mission of awareness and care for them."

Even with all his preflight planning, Heisey never knows what he might encounter when he leaves terra firma. It's not called the wild blue yonder for nothing. Rapidly changing conditions aloft can create conflict between his dual roles as photographer and pilot. The photographer's craving for drama can test the pilot's nerve.

"I normally avoid thunderstorms in my plane because they're just too dangerous," Heisey says. On one flight, he'd kept his eye on the summer storm clouds gathering over the Arizona-Mexico border. Showers were imminent, but the cells were scattered. Confident of safe zones between thunderheads if he needed to retreat, he took off from the Nogales airport as evening approached.

"I knew it was a thunderstorm because I could see the lightning, so I kept a respectful distance," he recalls. "I watched its dark clouds roil and glower. I wondered how close was too close, and thought darkly that if I sustained a direct hit by lightning I'd probably never know it."

A terrestrial photographer could have only watched as the storm moved away. But in the air, Heisey stayed with his quarry, maneuvering and photographing until sunset. "As the storm was losing vigor, the red ball of the sun flared behind the shifting veil of rain," he said. "The scene was so short-lived that I abandoned my chase and just shot the amazing tableau before me. I was exhilarated to share airspace with this modest behemoth."

Heisey landed in the fading light at the Nogales airport, and taxied back to his waiting trailer. He still remembers the smell of the air, perfumed with the fragrance of desert creosote. "Warmth enveloped me as I rolled to a stop, and I wasted no time stepping out of my flight suit," he says. "I was down from the sky."

A magic-carpet ride had returned to Earth. AH

**ADDITIONAL READING:** *Several books feature the aerial photography of Adriel Heisey, including* Under the Sun: A Sonoran Desert Odyssey, *Rio Nuevo Publishers, Tucson*; In the Fifth World: Portrait of the Navajo Nation, *Rio Nuevo Publishers, Tucson*; *and* From Above: Images of a Storied Land, *The Albuquerque Museum.*

online **Find expert photography advice and information at arizonahighways.com (Click on "Photography").**





## You'll Wonder Where the Yellow Went

ALL DAY LONG, drivers do double takes along Interstate 40, 3 miles east of Holbrook. No, it's not another Jurassic Park-gone-concrete. If *Tyrannosaurus rex* is the "tyrant king," then Holbrook is the king of kitsch. Situated in the middle of one of the richest paleontological sites in the world, the town has embraced its prehistoric predecessors. Along with others of his ilk, this concrete creature stalking northern Arizona's Painted Desert is getting a paint job of its own, courtesy of Carver (who uses only one name). During a recent renovation at Dinosaur Park, near the entrance to Petrified Forest National Park, volunteers spruced up the 'saurs, giving each a shiny new coat of paint to ensure that these *T. rexes* will tease and terrorize travelers for a long time to come.

–Sally Benford

KATE THOMPSON

Canyon del Muerto, Canyon de Chelly National Monument

## A Thousand-year Birthday Bash

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF the 83,840-acre Canyon de Chelly National Monument marks the latest notable event in a 1,000-year run of triumph and tragedy. The beautiful, undulating, 1,000-foot-tall red cliffs sheltered the Puebloan people (also called Anasazi) before they mysteriously vanished. The Navajos took their place, farming along the stream, tending sheep introduced by the Spanish and growing peach trees, probably acquired from refugees of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt against the Spanish. The Navajos held out in their canyon fortress until famed scout Kit Carson led the military expedition that torched their fields and forced them into a painful exile. The government eventually relented and the Navajos returned to the canyon. To protect some 700 archaeological sites, President Herbert Hoover made it a national monument in 1931, during the Great Depression.

Canyon de Chelly (pronounced de SHAY) probably derived its name from the mispronunciation of *tségi*, meaning "rock canyon" in Navajo. Despite temperatures that range from 105 degrees to –30 degrees, Navajo families still raise crops, livestock and peaches on the canyon floor. Concerns about the preservation of the cultural and natural resources within the canyon prompted the U.S. government to establish a national monument, giving the Navajos the right to rent horses and guide visitors into the canyon, with the exception of hiking the steep trail to White House Ruins.

So after sheltering human beings for a millennium, life in the canyon remains constant despite the wars, moon walks and iPods of the outside world.

Information: (928) 674-5500; www.nps.gov/cach. *—Janet Webb Farnsworth*

## Dude, It's a Pterodactyl

"DUDE, THERE'S A pterodactyl in your back yard!" This statement prompted me to run in hopes of catching a view of a Jurassic-period creature metamorphosing from the ground like a mystical phoenix bird in a very suburban neighborhood.

No 150 million-year-old "flying lizard" awaited, but the creature standing stoically on the block fence eying the golden koi in the small lily-covered pond was just as imposing. Its long bill, piercing golden eyes, stately legs and gray-blue feathers identified it not as a dinosaur but as a hungry great blue heron, hoping to slurp a fantail down its gullet before my father charged him in defense of his beloved fish.

*—Brian Minnick*

## Making Rugs the Old-fashioned Way

NAVAJO RUG PRICES have soared in recent years, as evidenced by the $401,000 sale price of a diamond-patterned 19th-century weaving in 2001. But for collectors like Steve Getzwiller, it's not the money—it's the authenticity that matters. That's why at Getzwiller's Nizhoni Ranch Gallery in Sonoita, southeast of Tucson, you can still buy the real thing—traditionally made rugs.

The Spanish brought herds of Churro sheep to the Southwest in the late 1500s, and Navajos used their long wool to make tightly woven, water-resistant blankets. Larger blankets were later used as rugs. Weavers passed on to their children the formulas to make yarn dyes by boiling plants and rocks.

Many weavers switched to synthetic dyes and commercially processed yarn to meet growing demand in the early 1900s, but Getzwiller offers contemporary and historic weavings made by traditional Navajo weavers who use naturally dyed, soft Churro wool. The hand-spun wool makes the rugs much smoother and heavier than imitations, due to the smooth fibers and lanolin in the wool.

Information: (520) 455-5020; www.navajorug.com.

*—Kimberly Hosey*

**Navajo rug weaver Suzie Yazzie spins Churro sheep wool for her rugs.**

## Monument to One Man and 1.4 Million Lions

EACH JANUARY, Lions Club International members converge on Fort Thomas to lionize the monument honoring club founder Melvin Jones, born on this military outpost in the Gila River Valley, some 146 miles east of Phoenix off U.S. Route 70.

Jones spent the first seven years of his life at Fort Thomas, which was then plagued by raiding Apaches and malaria and typhoid fever. His family moved to Chicago, where Jones eventually opened his own insurance company and enjoyed substantial success. In 1917, he and other civic-minded businessmen formed the Lions Club to support humanitarian efforts, especially help for the visually impaired, which was inspired by an address Helen Keller gave to the group in 1925. Today, the organization boasts 45,000 clubs with 1.4 million members, many of whom will gather on January 13 for the 38th annual rededication of the Melvin Jones Memorial in a quiet valley no longer worried about either Geronimo or malaria.

Information: www.lions-mjm.org. *—Tom Carpenter*




THESE TWO PAGES, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RANDY PRENTICE; PETER ENSENBERGER; DAVE BLY; TOM VEZO

BY DAVE ESKES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
DON B. AND RYAN B. STEVENSON

# uplifting

## a wobbly adventurer soars past fear

The cable looks thin and vulnerable as the stubby towplane revs up, then taxies down the runway. A couple of tentative jerks, a blur of Low Sonoran Desert shrubs, and the ground drops away. We're airborne. ✈ The towplane climbs west, then banks right toward a craggy foothill guarding the Sierra Estrella mountain range ("Star Mountains" in English). A few minutes later, pilot Jason Stephens releases the cable with a *thunk* and our Grob glider drifts to starboard.

**SUNSET SOARING** **Sleek and silent as the red-tailed hawks that often signal the presence of thermal drafts, a Grob G 103A sailplane glides home at sunset to the Estrella Sailport near Maricopa south of Phoenix.**

Our goal is to soar the length of the Estrellas, a 20-mile-long mountain range southwest of Phoenix. Despite their proximity to the city, the starkly rugged Estrellas remain largely overlooked and remote, as evidenced by occasional sightings of reclusive mountain sheep.

Jason sniffs out a thermal updraft, a rising column of hot air and works it, circling, to gain altitude. On good days, thermals quickly boot gliders up to 8,000 or 10,000 feet. Today is different.

The weather is ideal, with temperatures in the mid-80s, but thermal activity is uneven. We circle often.

At 32, Jason has been flying gliders for 19 years. "I grew up in the back seat of a bush plane," he says, alluding to his boyhood in Alaska, where his father owned a construction company. In 1987, spurred by deflating oil prices, the Stephens family moved to the Phoenix area and purchased Estrella Sailport. His dad oversees the business, while Jason serves as a staff instructor for a clientele drawn mostly from England, Germany and Japan.

"If you travel halfway around the world," Jason rationalizes, "you want to make sure you have good weather and lots of flying time."

Another thermal bumps the glider like a

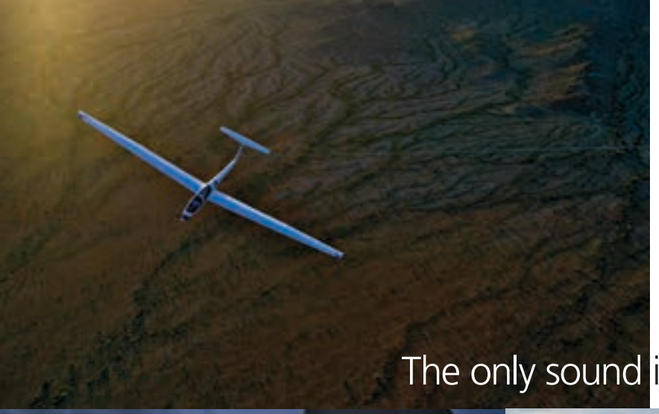
**HORIZON? WHAT HORIZON?** Earth and sky appear dizzyingly out of kilter as pilot Jason Stephens banks into a turn above central Arizona's Sonoran Desert (left).

**ABOVE THE STARS** Late-afternoon light creates a haze between a sailplane and the rugged Sierra Estrella mountain range.

On good days, thermals quickly boot gliders up to 8,000 or 10,000 feet.

**WHAT A DRAG** With no engines of their own, gliders rely on motorized aircraft, such as the Piper Pawnee pictured here, to tow them aloft.

**STEADY NOW** Austin Fox trots alongside one of Estrella Sailport's three Grob G 103As, keeping the wings balanced as a precautionary measure prior to takeoff.



WANT ONE? **You can purchase your own used G 103A (left and below), originally manufactured in Germany by Grob Aerospace, for $35,000 to $50,000, although newer designs currently sell in the $100,000 to $140,000 range.**

The only sound is air rushing past the cockpit.


AND THEN I . . . **Sailplane pilots Tom Allen (left) and Jason Stephens swap stories of the day's exploits.**

bass tugging on a line, and Jason follows the action, turning this way and that, the lurching joystick between my knees a nuanced choreography of control. We climb swiftly, then drop a little and climb again until we have gained enough altitude to swoop over a desert pass to the southern end of the Estrellas.

It is cooler than I expected, thanks to a vent in the instrument panel. The only sound is air rushing past the cockpit. I glance up, and we are headed straight toward a massive rock outcropping. A friendly bump, the nose lifts and we soar up and over the ridge.

To fly a glider is to read nature. Pilots constantly analyze clouds, sunlight, terrain and weather. Even birds play a role. Jason keeps an eye out for red-tailed hawks and turkey vultures to assist in locating thermals. They are the real experts. Sometimes they fly along with him.

Although gliders depend on fickle thermals and updrafts to stay aloft, they can fly for hours under optimal conditions. Jason has flown to Tucson and back on several occasions, while other area pilots routinely make round-trip flights to the Grand Canyon, New Mexico and other locations.

According to veteran Scottsdale competition pilot Paul Cordell, "Eight-hour-plus flights in the summer are possible."

Cordell says pilots flying along the Appalachian Ridge often fly for 14 hours and cover nearly 2,000 miles. Similar flights are made along the California coast. In 1986, Robert Harris set a world soaring altitude record over the Sierra Nevadas by piloting his sailplane to 49,009 feet. The temperature plummeted to 65 below and frost covered the canopy. He had to descend, using his backup oxygen system.

Jason recalls spiraling up to 17,600 feet. "It was 114 degrees on the ground," he says, "but it was freezing up there." The average summer thermal in the Phoenix area ranges from 12,000 to 14,000 feet.

As we nose around, we are suddenly bumped upward as if by a giant hand.

"Here's a big thermal," Jason says jubilantly. "The biggest yet. It's about time. We're climbing up at about 900 feet per minute.

"There are so many variables in finding a thermal," he muses. "You never figure it all out. You play the odds and go to the places where it should be working and see what happens. Luck is a factor."

Now comfortably high, we head northwest along the spine of the range.

There is a forbidding quality to the Estrellas when seen from here. Massive and barren, they dominate the sweeping desert vistas like a brooding prehistoric beast. Composed of Precambrian rock, the oldest on Earth, there is no softness to them, only a ruthless beauty.

To the north, a wide green riparian strip that is the Gila River winds west between the Estrellas and South Mountain. The riverbed betrays no glint of water. Farther north, Phoenix sprawls hazy and indistinct.

Montezuma Peak—Jason's favorite,

YEAR-ROUND SPORT **With a Grob's 57.4-foot wingspan and empty weight of just 859 pounds, a skilled pilot can take full advantage of Arizona's thermals from late March through October, and ride winter's winds over mountain ranges the rest of the year.**

RARIN' TO GO **Budding glider pilots like Brian Henry of Fairfield, Connecticut (left) come from all over the world to take advantage of Arizona's ideal sailplane conditions.**

. . . for every mile of altitude, it can glide 37 miles.

AT YOUR SERVICE **Utilizing the Stephens' fleet, most beginners averaging 15 to 20 minutes of flying time per session can earn a private glider license within 10 to 15 hours of flight time.**

because it produces huge thermals—rears up below us. At 4,308 feet, it is the second highest peak in the Estrellas. (The highest, at 4,500 feet, is unnamed.) A lonely weather station and tower, dwarfed by its host, hugs the jagged peak.

"Down there to your left is Rainbow Valley Airstrip," Jason says. "It's one of our alternate [emergency] strips. I've pulled a few gliders out of there over the years."

Glider pilots seldom land in the desert anymore. There are numerous alternate strips, and glider performance has improved. The Grob, for example, has a glide ratio of 37 to 1, meaning that for every mile of altitude, it can glide 37 miles. Cordell's plane, a Schempp-Hirth, has a glide ratio of 60 to 1, plus a Global Positioning System device that can be programmed with vital flight information.

Of course, nothing is a hundred percent.

"I landed in a Texas field once during an air race," Jason says. "Within two minutes a lady drove up in a truck and handed me a beer."

As we soar across the Estrellas, I search for Quartz Peak, an outcropping of the snowy mineral found nowhere else in the range. But I miss it. Down there, too, obscured by flanks and shadows, is a mine, reputed by some fanciful history buffs to be of Spanish origin, with stone ruins and a 70-foot vertical shaft.

At the northern end of the Estrellas, Jason directs my gaze to a tiny oval in the distance. It is Phoenix International Raceway. It was there, I wistfully recall, that I once took a few laps with four-time Indy winner Rick Mears. As we headed into a turn at 120 mph, Mears chatted casually. Easy for him—he was driving.

Our return flight is nearly a straight shot. We are at 7,500 feet with altitude to spare and moving swiftly, as the bumping and amplified rush of air testify. We have been up a little more than an hour.

Before landing, we make a wide arc over a huge auto recycling yard—"Good lift," Jason observes—and the soft green checkerboard of farmland skirting the town of Maricopa. It is a sight that awaits Jason every morning when he climbs into his RV4 kit plane at Chandler Municipal Airport and flies to work.

The sailport is dead ahead, and Jason noses the Grob down for a flyby.

Air screaming, we streak low over the buildings and runways at 120 knots, then up, out and around for the approach. We float for only a moment before the runway rushes upward to greet us. AH

*Dave Eskes of Phoenix admires all types of unconventional aircraft and looks forward to the day when dirigibles rule the skies again.*

*Don B. and Ryan B. Stevenson of Tempe teamed up to capture both sides of the soaring story—from inside the cockpit (Ryan) and by air-to-air (Don)—each envious of the other's assignment.*

online **Discover other Arizona aerial adventures at arizonahighways.com (click on "January Trip Planner").**

## when you go

**Location:** 27 miles south of Phoenix.
**Getting There:** Take Interstate 10 south to Exit 164; follow State Route 347 south to the town of Maricopa and turn right onto State Route 238. Drive west 6.5 miles to the sailport entrance.
**Travel Advisory:** Only a weathered white sign indicates the dirt road entrance to the sailport.
**Additional Information:** Estrella Sailport, (520) 568-2318; www.azsoaring.com.



PETER ENSENBERGER

## Fly, Float and Fall: Air Tour Guide By Kimberly Hosey

Even in a state of hikers, climbers, kayakers, swimmers and skiers, some people feel at home in the air—and, really, it makes sense. As we float, fly or fall, the state reveals itself as a wonderland of intricate structure. Lizards and rabbits dash under bushes, hawks and eagles soar on thermals, the cacophony of the streets below fades into a faint grid. Perspective grows and contemplation abounds. So consider these natural highs.

### HOT AIR BALLOONING

Lift off gently to watch the sun rise over the red rocks of Sedona and savor the magnificent views and after-flight champagne.

**Red Rock Balloon Adventures,** Sedona. (800) 258-3754; www.redrockballoons.com.

**Roping the Wind,** Mesa. San Tan and Superstition mountains; (480) 807-0001; www.ropingthewind.com.

**Zephyr Balloon,** Phoenix. Sunrise flight; (480) 991-4260; www.azballoon.com.

### SOARING

**Sky King Soaring,** Payson. Hop into a sailplane or motorglider and have a close encounter with a cloud while drifting over the Mogollon Rim, Tonto Natural Bridge or Payson. (480) 759-5464; www.skykingsoaring.com.

### HANG-GLIDING

Take flight while hanging from a frame-and-fabric wing. Sound too risky? Never fear, hang-gliding schools offer tandem flights, with an instructor ready to take the controls. After all, gliding's a breeze—it's the landing that worries you. So let it worry the instructor while you enjoy the scenery.

**Sky Masters School of Hang Gliding,** Phoenix. Learn from the oldest hang-gliding school in Arizona; (602) 867-6770; www.arizonahanggliding.info/.

**Venture Flight,** Prescott. Drift over history, forests and scenic Prescott; (928) 308-2409; www.ventureflight.com.

### HELICOPTER TOURS

If you prefer a rotor and a floor, hop on a helicopter and tour Sedona or the Grand Canyon.

**Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters,** Grand Canyon Airport. (800) 528-2418; www.papillon.com.

**Arizona Helicopter Tours,** Sedona. (928) 282-0904; www.azheli.com.

### SKYDIVING

Adrenaline junkies take note: Why fly when you can fall? Drifting on a breeze is dreamy, plummeting from 13,000 feet is a rush. For an extreme view of Arizona from the air, try these parachuting pros, who offer tandem jumps.

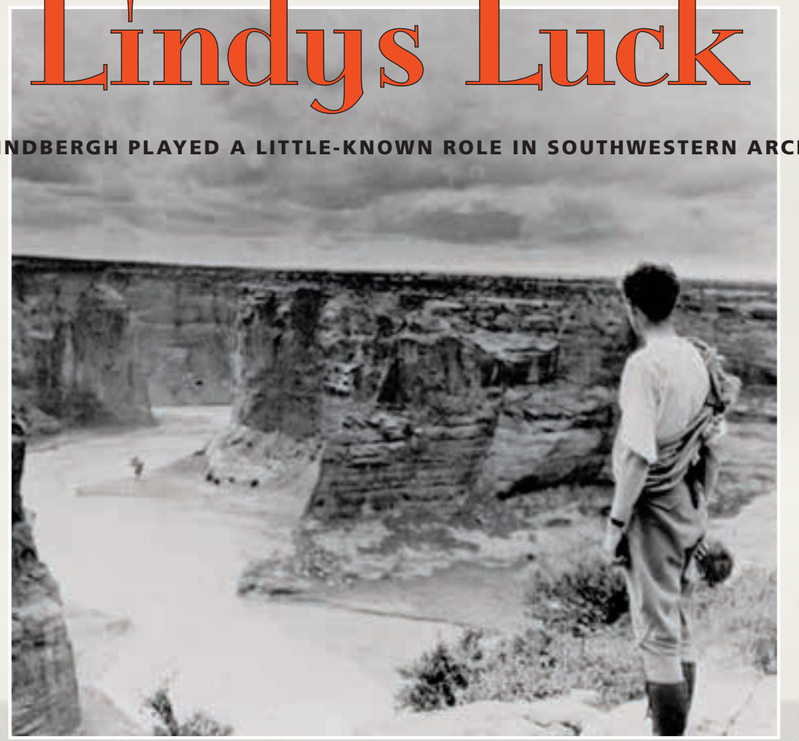
**Skydive Arizona,** Eloy. (520) 466-4777 or (800) 858-5867; www.skydiveaz.com.

**Skydive Marana,** Marana. (520) 682-4441 or (800) 647-5867; www.skydivemarana.com.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT **A sunset sky promises another fair day of soaring for pilots Allen (left) and Stephens (right).**

# Lindy's Luck

## CHARLES LINDBERGH PLAYED A LITTLE-KNOWN ROLE IN SOUTHWESTERN ARCHAEOLOGY



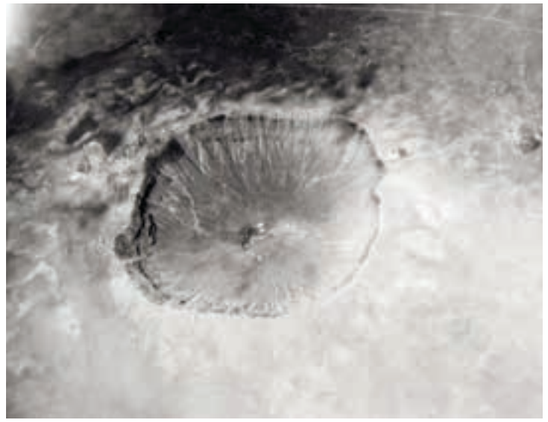
With climbing gear slung over his shoulder, Charles surveys the view from a rim in Canyon de Chelly.
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY YALE UNIVERSITY MANUSCRIPTS AND ARCHIVES

BY ERIK BERG

**The archaeologists sat quietly** around their campfire near Antelope House Ruin in Canyon del Muerto one lonely afternoon in the summer of 1929, a hard day's drive on bad roads from the nearest town—alone but for the ghosts of an ancient past. Or so they thought. They might not have been surprised if ancient ghosts had rustled out of the ruins. But they were flat amazed when the most famous couple in America suddenly appeared around a bend in the canyon, a young man with a lanky build and a petite woman with dark locks and a shy smile. Charles and Anne Lindbergh had married under a glare of publicity a month earlier, but now stood before the startled group of scientists in one of the most remote corners of the Southwest.

Shortly after marrying, Charles and Anne Lindbergh escaped publicity hounds and took refuge in the West. While flying over the Navajo Indian Reservation in 1929, they viewed several ancestral Puebloan ruins such as Pueblo Bonito Ruin at Chaco Canyon.
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO

With archaeologist Omer Tatum (right), the Lindberghs search for a Canyon de Chelly cliff ruin that Charles had viewed from the air. COURTESY YALE UNIVERSITY



The first aerial photographs of Arizona taken by the Lindberghs gave scientists a better understanding of the state's unique landmarks, such as Meteor Crater (above). COURTESY YALE UNIVERSITY

During their flights, the Lindberghs marveled at the splendor and serenity of the Grand Canyon (right). COURTESY MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO

**Charles was the first to break the silence.** "How are you fixed for grub?" he asked casually.

Two years earlier, the shy airmail pilot from Minnesota had made the first successful flight across the Atlantic Ocean in his custom-built monoplane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*. An instant hero, he received a ticker-tape parade in New York City, became *Time* magazine's first "Man of the Year" and toured the country promoting air travel. The introverted loner had become the embodiment of America's fascination with aviation. Fans and reporters besieged him wherever he went, businesses begged him for endorsements and promoters hounded him with offers. Pained by his celebrity status, Lindbergh fled crowds and interviews. His historic flight had shrunk the world, and now it was closing in around him.

But fame had benefits, too, including a job as technical adviser for the Transcontinental Air Transport (T.A.T.) Co., which was to offer the nation's first coast-to-coast air service. Lindbergh helped identify the route and supervised the construction of airports, including those in the Southwest at Albuquerque, New Mexico, and in Winslow and Kingman in Arizona. Fame also introduced him to Anne Morrow, the daughter of the American ambassador to Mexico. Mousy and shy, with a love of poetry and reading, Morrow understood Lindbergh's fragile inner world. She also learned to share his disdain for the press, who reported their every public appearance and bribed household staff for details. Even after their marriage in May 1929, reporters and photographers spied on them during their honeymoon cruise along the New England coast. "They found us again this morning," wrote Anne from aboard their ship, "—that terrifying drone of a plane hunting you, and boats."

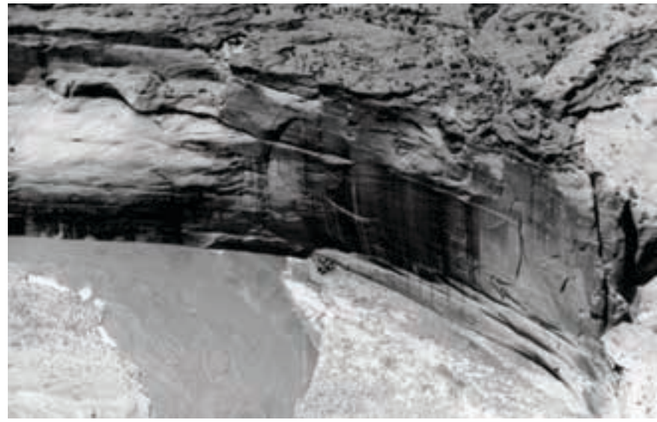
Upon returning to New York, the couple immediately set out again on an inspection tour of the entire T.A.T. route before its July 11 launch. The journey also had a second, secret purpose, to take aerial photographs of ancient ruins and geographical features across the Southwest. The request came from the Carnegie Institution of Washington, which was funding several excavations in the area and hoped the photographs would identify new ruins and help reveal the full extent and layout of known sites.

Flying an open-cockpit biplane, the newlyweds reached Albuquerque on July 5 and then discreetly veered northwest over the Navajo Indian Reservation to take photographs of the ruins in Chaco Canyon and Canyon de Chelly. The following day, they flew over the Grand Canyon before continuing to California. Excited by her first view of the Southwest, Anne wrote her mother from Winslow about flying over "desolate country but very thrilling, over deserted canyons where the river was dried up and we saw the ruins of old Indian cities along the river bed." She was also fascinated by the traditional Navajo dwellings, or hogans, which she described as "funny little stone houses (like igloos) with a hole in the top for smoke."

The couple's arrival in Los Angeles put them back in the spotlight. Surrounded by movie stars and business leaders, they smiled and waved for the cameras while longing for the freedom and solitude of the skies.

After meeting in Los Angeles with officials from the Carnegie Institution, they agreed to visit archaeologist Dr. Alfred Kidder's Pecos field camp near Santa Fe, New Mexico. They left on July 21 and stopped in Winslow to photograph nearby Meteor Crater before heading to northern Arizona's Canyon de Chelly and Canyon del Muerto. For several hours, they traced the chasms from the air, marveling at the beauty of the canyons, photographing the ruins and buzzing the field camp of Kidder's friend and associate, Earl Morris. Charles would lean out of the cockpit to take pictures while Anne practiced her developing skills as a pilot. Along one wall of Canyon de Chelly, they spotted a cluster of rooms hidden in a large alcove just below the upper rim, difficult to detect from the ground. They carefully photographed its

In their flights over Arizona, Anne honed her piloting skills while Charles leaned out of the cockpit to snap aerial photos. This image shows Canyon del Muerto where it enters Canyon de Chelly in the northeastern corner of the state. COURTESY MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO



In a little over a week, the Lindberghs observed dozens of ancient pueblos, like White House Ruins (in shadow, center of photograph), proving the worth of aviation in archaeology. COURTESY MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO

Using photographs for reference, Charles and Anne check their location in Canyon de Chelly.
COURTESY YALE UNIVERSITY

## when you go


**Location:** Canyon de Chelly National Monument is near the town of Chinle in the heart of the Navajo Indian Reservation.
**Getting There:** From Flagstaff, take Interstate 40 east 135 miles to Chambers near the New Mexico border. At Chambers, take U.S. Route 191 north 38 miles to Ganado. From Ganado, take State Route 264 west for 6 miles and then drive north again on U.S. 191 for 30 miles to the Chinle turnoff at Navajo Route 7.
**Hours:** Visitors center is open daily, 8 A.M. to 5 P.M.
**Additional Information:** (928) 674-5500; www.nps.gov/cach.

location before continuing east toward Kidder's camp at Pecos.

Over the next several days, Kidder directed the Lindberghs in flights across northern New Mexico to photograph known sites and explore new areas. They treasured the simplicity of camp life and the Navajo artwork they saw in Santa Fe. But passersby began to wonder about the strange airplane, and eventually reporters learned of their presence. The world was closing in again. It was time to move on.

So Charles and Anne decided to make one last flight to drop prints of their Canyon de Chelly photographs of the unknown ruins into Morris' camp from the air. As they prepared to drop their package late on July 27, Charles spotted a cliff-edge landing site. He set down and they followed a rough foot trail to the canyon bottom. Unfortunately, Earl and Ann Morris had left two days earlier to meet visitors in Farmington. But their assistants, Oscar and Omer Tatum, and a young student named Edward "Bud" Weyer Jr., quickly welcomed the famous strangers into camp.

Earlier that summer, the archaeologists had stocked up on cheap tabloid newspapers to use as wrapping paper when packaging artifacts. As a result, the glaring headlines of "Anne and Lindy Married" covered the camp. Noting their guests' embarrassment, Bud and Omer quickly hid the papers while Oscar helped set up their bedrolls. After dinner, they all studied Lindbergh's aerial photographs and talked archaeology late into the night. Charles and Anne were entranced by the beauty, grandeur and quiet solitude of the canyons. Here they were no longer celebrities. For perhaps the first time since their marriage, they could truly relax. "I didn't know it was possible really to get away from things," Anne observed wistfully. That night a storm rolled in, filling the sky with lightning and coating the cliffs with sheets of rainwater as the archaeologists and their visitors slept beneath the cover of a large alcove.

In the morning, Bud and Omer joined Charles and Anne in a search for the mysterious rim-top ruin the Lindberghs had spotted from the air during their earlier flights. They climbed out of the canyon and set out for Canyon de Chelly, but the outing proved longer and rougher than expected as they pushed through dense underbrush, scrambled across gullies and checked their location against the photographs. They soon ran out of water and were forced to drink from potholes in the rocks. Shortly before noon, they finally located the ruin in the northern face of Canyon de Chelly, hidden in a wide indentation below the rim. Here the ancestral Puebloans had walled off a number of small alcoves to create a collection of cozy rooms. After exploring their discovery and eating a brief lunch, the group returned to camp.

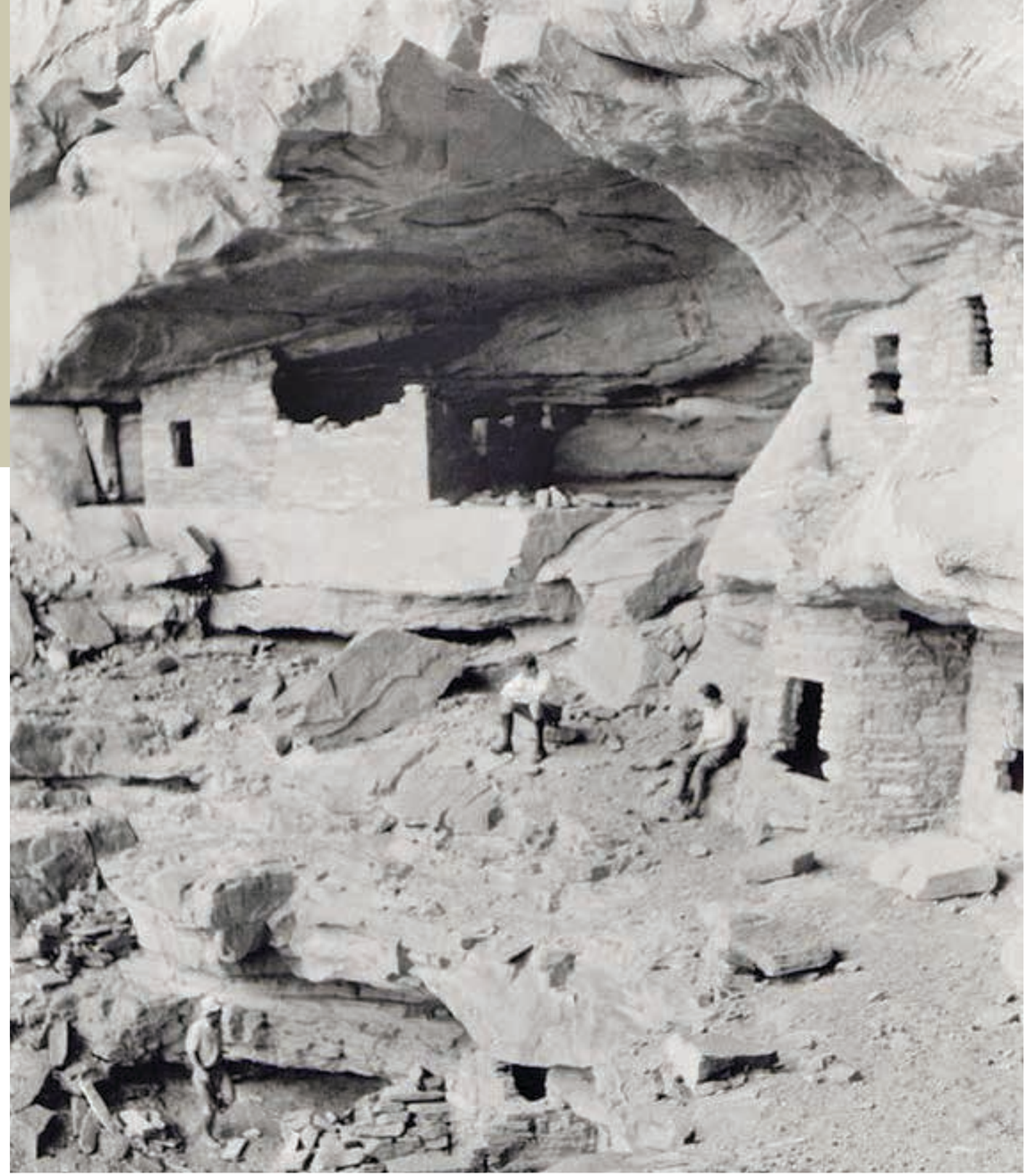
Throughout the long hike, Anne impressed everyone by keeping pace with her long-legged husband without complaining or asking to rest. Upon their return, however, she removed her boots to reveal silver-dollar-sized blisters on both feet. After a short rest, the Lindberghs began their long journey home.

"How are the rice and curry holding out?" asked Oscar after their famous guests had departed. "We want to be ready to receive the King of Siam, case he comes riding up the canyon on the back of an elephant."

In a little over a week, the Lindberghs had observed dozens of archaeological sites, discovered several new ones and created an unprecedented photographic catalog of the ancient Southwest. The project had successfully demonstrated the value of aviation in archaeology, and the published reports by the Carnegie Institution probably helped influence Congress and President Hoover to establish Canyon de Chelly National Monument in 1931. Moreover, the Lindberghs had briefly regained a sense of freedom. Charles and Anne remained friends with the Kidders for many years, and would reportedly slip into Winslow from time to time to escape the public eye and remember the adventures of their youth.

When he died in 1974, Charles Lindbergh requested that his funeral ceremony include words from a Navajo prayer. Like the archaeologists, he had come to Canyon de Chelly to hunt secrets, but like the Navajos, found instead respite and refuge.

*Historian Erik Berg of Phoenix has a special interest in the role of science and technology in the American Southwest. He published a detailed account of the Lindberghs' archaeology adventures in the spring 2004 issue of the* Journal of Arizona History.



Along with archaeologist Tatum, the Lindberghs get a close look at Beehive Ruin (above) in Canyon de Chelly.
COURTESY YALE UNIVERSITY

The couple ended their trip when reporters discovered the Lindberghs' plane (left) at a field camp in Pecos, New Mexico.
COURTESY PEABODY MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOLOGY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, THE KIDDER COLLECTION

A PORTFOLIO BY ADRIEL HEISEY

# Raw Wonder

An aerial photographer illuminates why he takes to the sky to get close to the land

"...**I practically** levitated into the great spaces above Arizona when I first discovered them as a young man."

**Totem Pole and Yei Bichei, Monument Valley**

"Shadows come to life when seen from the air, sometimes stealing the show from the main subject. I can maneuver in my little airplane to find just the right altitude and distance to frame the Yei Bichei formation [right] and Totem Pole [center] in their own shadows. "

To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

Arizona may well be the best state in the union for flying. That's a bold thing to say, I know, but I've spent two decades of my life proving it. Coming from the murk and muddle of Eastern skies, where I began my flying career, I practically levitated into the great spaces above Arizona when I first discovered them as a young man. They held everything I cherished: the drama of weather, of landform, of civilizations old and new and air clear enough to take it in all at once.

Flying is what I do. It's how I put bread on the table, and it's also how I make sense of things. Add up all my pilot time, and it goes well past a year spent looking down on the vast puzzle of our world from one cockpit or another. Some fliers say that time in the sky doesn't count against their allotted lifespan. A quaint notion, perhaps, but for me there is indeed a feeling that I've somehow stepped out of the ordinary when I'm airborne. I can't feel tired or old or jaded. There's too much raw wonder.

The trouble is that flying has become clinical. This is good for safety and reliability, but we risk making it so efficient and purpose-driven that the joy is squeezed out. We think of flying as being synonymous with speed and aloofness. What if it meant the opposite? What if you flew to get close to the land, to linger for understanding and to savor its beauty? What if you really didn't go anywhere but deeper into the place you already were by experiencing it in greater wholeness? This, too, can be flying, and it is my favorite kind.

Arizona from above—the intimate, loving regard of a land beyond reckoning—is a personal encounter far beyond the dimensions of our existence that moves us to quiet the chatter in our minds and remember our place in the scheme of things. In flight, we find ourselves identified anew with the true character of our home, and upon landing we are challenged to make good on our fresh understanding. AH

### Bob Thompson Peak, Huachuca Mountains

**"The sky islands of southern Arizona are a different world from the desert floor below, especially in winter. The day before I photographed this mountain [left], blizzard conditions assailed the peaks, while the San Pedro River valley nearby received gentle winter rains. I was in position at a valley airstrip the night before clearing was forecast, and took off in predawn gloom in hopes of finding better conditions aloft. I discovered a break in the clouds, and enduring the sting of snow crystals on my face, climbed to clear air above, where the splendor of sunrise greeted a wintry world."**

■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

### Black Butte, Navajo Nation

**"Camped in the remote Hopi Buttes of northern Arizona, I used a little-traveled dirt road as my runway, flying morning and evening to photograph the volcanic landscape [right] in the best light. A Navajo family living nearby came over to see my strange craft, and I didn't disappoint them; my plane is so skeletal that you see virtually every part of the machine in a casual walk-around. Later I sent them a print of a photo I made of their homesite—a lonely outpost in a vast land."**

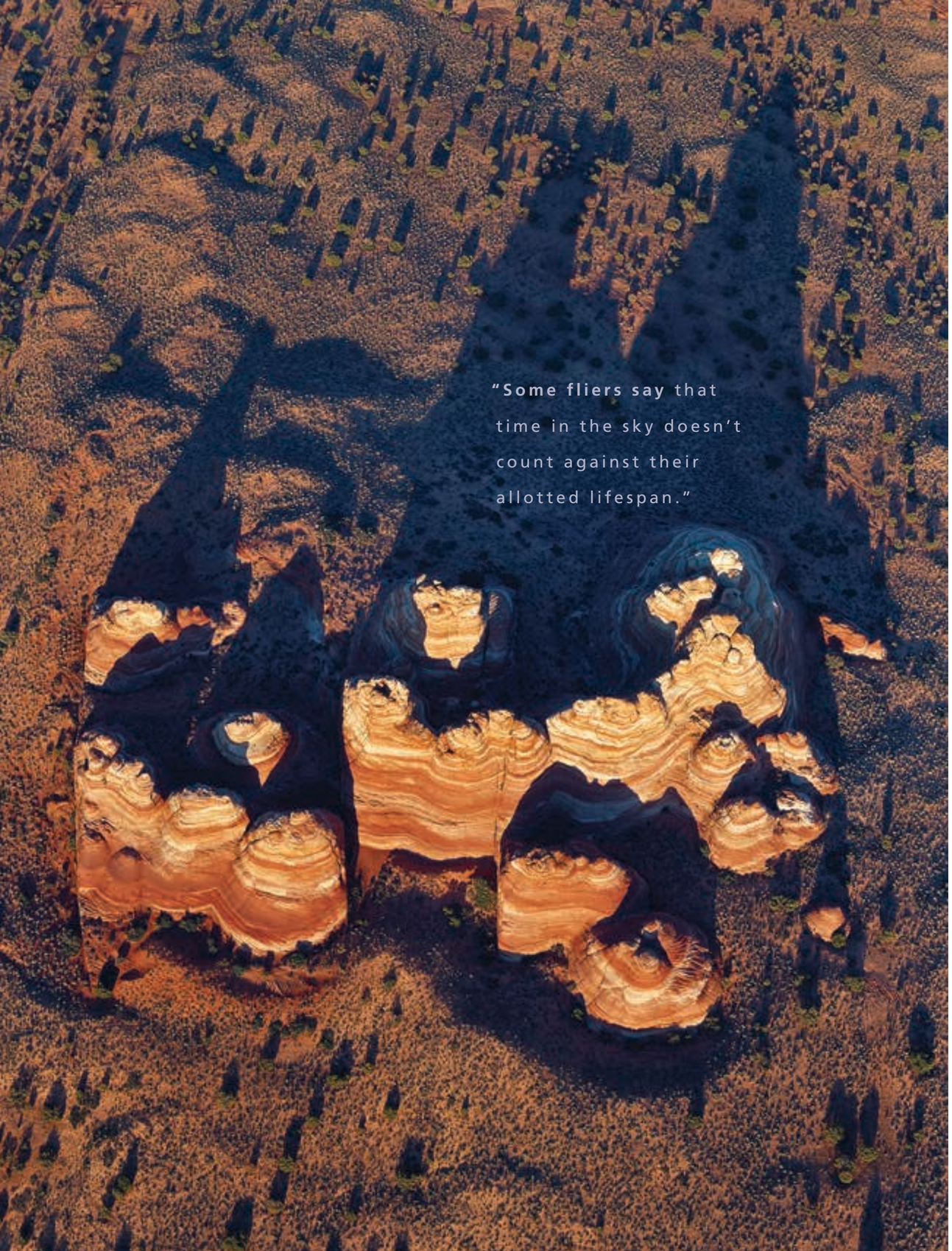
■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

**"What if** you flew to get close to the land, to linger for understanding and to savor its beauty?"

## Erosion in Paria Canyon

"Sometimes looking straight down at the floor of the land is an amazing aerial vantage. This can be counterintuitive in a place like Paria Canyon, where the great rock walls first grab your attention. But erosion, over time, leaves dazzling patterns that are all but lost underfoot to the earthbound hiker. As I flew between the canyon rims to make this photograph, I had to balance my attention between the captivating scene below and the looming rocks around me; this was no time for 'rapture of the heights.' "

To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.




### Coyote Buttes

**"You would never know I was hanging on for dear life in turbulent air by looking at this photograph [left], but the wind was brisk as it flowed over the cliffs and canyons of this rugged landscape. I struggled for a viewpoint that would frame both the buttes and their shadows. Returning safely to my landing strip at Lee's Ferry that evening felt like a new lease on life; rough air always stirs a primal fear in me, no matter how experienced I become.**

**To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.**

### SP Mountain With Lava Flow

**"The high altitude necessary to show the lava flow and its crater of origin together [below] also offered better flying conditions. I found out the hard way that afternoon winds across the volcanic landscape north of Flagstaff kick up into rowdy turbulence closer to the ground."**

### Poppy Canyon, Peloncillo Mountains

**"While flying in the Bowie area one spring, I could see far out to the northeast an unmistakable smear of color across a distant mountain range [above]. Consulting my maps, I identified them as the Peloncillos, and discovered they held a canyon with this evocative name. On the next morning's flight, I found the canyon's namesake flower in full glory. How long has this hidden valley been growing wild stands of poppies to be memorialized on the topographic map?"**

### Santa Cruz River Near Tubac

**"Never do I feel more like I'm riding a magic carpet than when flying over a desert river [above] early on a summer morning. I smell the moist air rising from the treetops and feel the coolness still pooled in the valley bottom. "**

### Morning Thunderstorm Approaching Sedona

**"Even nonpilots know that flying near thunderstorms can be dangerous. But I learn to read the signs, like a sailor reading the sea—and I always have an escape plan. And then, sometimes, I'll accept the risk and move in for a ringside seat. On this late summer morning near Sedona [left], I made it safely back to the airport before the front hit, stowed my plane in its trailer and enjoyed the storm's arrival like any other sensible earthling."**

**"In flight**, we find ourselves identified anew with the true character of our home . . ."

### Lost Wilson Mountain and Sterling Canyon

**"Flying around the rocks at Sedona [above] is great exercise for the imagination. Not only are the colors and forms endlessly shifting, but the geology makes me feel like a mayfly. I am waltzing through space that used to be solid rock."**

**To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.**

### Barchan Dunes, Navajo Nation

**"Looking straight down is easy in my plane [left]. Just imagine leaning over in your desk chair to find a paperclip you dropped on the floor, and you've got the basic motion. But as I lean, my plane begins to bank, and then I have a clear view of what's directly beneath me. When I've made my shot, I level the wings, and if it was something special, I'll turn around and do it again."**

**To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.**

"Flying is . . . how I make sense of things."

### Upper Reaches of the Santa Cruz River

**"Flying over high desert grasslands [above] is a different sensation than flying over the Grand Canyon. I feel as if I could safely land anywhere below me, at a moment's notice, and my mood becomes serene. I notice how my inner state seems to mirror the topography below me. This is not a video game. I am airborne, but by no means aloof."**

■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

### East End of the Grand Canyon

**"Special airspace restrictions over the Grand Canyon keep pilots at high altitudes when they cross it [left]. So as I soared 2 miles above the chasm, bobbing in the currents, waves of awe and fear washed through me without mercy. A friend who flew with me once told me that riding in my plane felt like teetering on a thousand-foot-tall telephone pole. I never felt that way at all—until I flew above the Canyon."**

■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

# BISBEE *state* OF *mind*

BEEKEEPERS, ARTISTS AND OFFBEAT REFUGEES PROVE THAT THERE'S MORE TO A COMMUNITY THAN GEOGRAPHY

*By* **TOM CARPENTER**
*Photographs by* **DAVID ZICKL**

### KILLER INSTINCTS

**In a reinforced nylon suit, "Killer Bee Guy" Reed Booth helps take the sting out of southern Arizona's Africanized bee population by moving them out of harm's way. (Just for fun, we added the sting back in by "cloning" some extra bees in the foreground.) Booth likens a killer-bee hive in a residential setting to a rattlesnake on the back porch, calling them "time bombs waiting to go off." When provoked, the aggressive insects are renowned for their ability to take down anything from humans to horses. In the right environment though, killer bees can be a sweet business. A higher metabolism (and the fact that they work weekends and holidays) enables the insects to produce twice as much honey, which Booth bottles for his award-winning Killer B brand of mustards, honey-butter—even lip balm. Booth's killer reputation won him an hour-long spot on the "Discovery Channel" that will air next fall. His risky *bzzz*-ness is also chronicled on www.killerbeeguy.com, and throughout his Bisbee storefront.**

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID ZICKL AND BILLIE JO BISHOP

# Bisbee.

Is it a place or a state of mind? Rather than answer that question, perhaps we should heed the octagonal sign at the intersection of Brewery Gulch and Howell Avenue that has the word "trying" scrawled across "STOP." Perhaps, but it makes sense to move around town and talk to some of the folks who call Bisbee home. If they don't know the answer, nobody does.

Ralph Rattelmueller speculates that he is "quite possibly the last independent grocer in America." He owns and operates Mimosa Market, a hundred-year-old grocery store located way up Brewery Gulch.

He came to Bisbee the way most folks do, the long way. He had heard about Bisbee from his brother, but had never visited. Then, "I had a kid who worked for me for a short time who was from Bisbee. He was a very unique person. He was just raised different. He didn't go to conventional schools and he had a crazy laugh. He was a very happy guy, and that just made me think about Bisbee some more."

Ralph and his wife and daughter took a vacation to Bisbee. "We had no intention of moving here. We were looking for something—my wife and daughter and I—for something to do. We were walking up here to see the Muheim [Heritage House Museum] and we saw the store. My wife and I looked at it and said, 'We can do this.' " They had just enough money from the sale of their home in Denver to buy the store.

"It's a really different kind of place," Ralph says. "We have a lot of artists and writers and musicians here, and those

## WATCH IT GROW

**At Bisbee's Southwest School of Botanical Medicine, Michael Moore (above) plants the ancient seeds of healing know-how into the minds of budding herbalists. The self-proclaimed "practicing humanist" has been teaching the curative powers of bushes and blooms for more than 25 years. Moore refers to his notable plant pedagogy as "subclinical" treatment: avoiding major medical mishaps through preventative and balanced body care. What began as a simple form of correspondence has blossomed into an art form for Kate Pearson (far right) with fellow Bisbee artist and friend Gretchen Baer, in the Postcard Room above her Naco Road studio. "I don't like to waste," says the image-centric Pearson, who has been amassing decorative minimail for 40 years. Her carefully placed collection now exceeds 4,000 postcards.**


**TAKING CARE OF BISBEE-NESS**

**George Bellinger and Lou Anne Sterbick-Nelson (left) are known for applying their strokes of creative genius to the canvas of their community. Sterbick-Nelson manages Belleza Gallery, which supports a shelter and job training for women in need. Bellinger, a featured Bizzart Gallery painter, promotes global diversity through his work. Barbara Johnson and Ralph Rattelmueller (below left) are the latest in the succession of hometown grocers to occupy 215 Brewery Gulch Road. The pair, along with their daughter, recently took over Mimosa Market, which imports worldly goods with a local family- and pet-friendly flare. Kristen Glover (below) waits on every man, woman and child who steps into the bustling Dot's Diner for a bite of '50s-style fare and Glover's renowned service with a smile. John Palomina and Neta Chavez (opposite page) just can't seem to get out of depth. The retired miners guide visitors into Bisbee's Copper Queen Mine.**


are just the kind of people I've always gravitated toward anyway."

Before he and his wife moved to Bisbee four years ago, they spent time in Hawaii. He says, "This place reminded us of that. They call them 'sky islands' in Arizona. We have pretty much an island lifestyle here."

The Mule Mountains are the sky island upon which sits Bisbee, the seat of Cochise County. Mount Ballard, elevation 7,365 feet, is the highest point. The road to the Mule Mountains is State Route 80 from Benson on Interstate 10, through St. David and Tombstone. The road climbs to the 1,400-foot-long Mule Pass Tunnel, which was completed in 1958, then drops into Tombstone Canyon and Mule Gulch, where Bisbee clings to both sides and fills the canyon floor.

Nobody in his right mind would build a town here without a very good reason. For Bisbee, that good reason was copper. The discovery story goes something like this: In 1877, an Army lieutenant named Anthony Rucker was on patrol in the Mule Mountains with a platoon under his command when the soldiers noticed evidence of minerals. The town was founded in 1880 and named after DeWitt Bisbee, a San Francisco financier who put up money to get the Copper Queen mine operational. Within a year, the rush was on, and by the early 1900s, the population hit 20,000. The Phelps Dodge Corp. ceased operation in Bisbee in 1975, ending a mining era that extracted almost 3 million ounces of gold and 8 billion pounds of copper from the tunnels and open pits in and around Bisbee.

The tidiest place to learn about local history is the Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum. The photographs and exhibits provide a remarkable glimpse of the good, the bad and the ugly of Bisbee's rich past. The coolest and least tidy place for a history lesson is the Queen Mine tour that requires visitors to don a slicker, hardhat and miner's lamp before boarding the miner's train that takes them into the chilly mine for an hour-long underground tour.

Although the population has shrunk to fewer than 6,600, reports of Bisbee's demise have proven premature. Today, it is a unique artist and retirement community.

The brightly painted Adirondack chairs outside the Belleza Gallery on Main Street are made by women enrolled in the Women's Transition Project (WTP), which also owns the Belleza Gallery. Lou Anne Sterbick-Nelson is the gallery manager.

A retired attorney from Tacoma, Washington, Sterbick-

## THINGS TO DO IN BISBEE

Whether you clap on a miner's hardhat for an underground mine tour or just meander the twisting streets lined with shops, you'll find something to occupy you and the family in the old mining town of Bisbee. Just be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes for climbing the stairs that stretch up and down Bisbee's canyon walls.

**Greater Bisbee Chamber of Commerce:** Information about Bisbee lodging, dining, shopping and attractions. One Main Street. (866) 224-7233 or (520) 432-5421. www.bisbeearizona.com or www.discoverbisbee.com.

**Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum:** Journey through the early days of Bisbee and explore the mining activities that put the city on the map as one of the world's richest mineral sites. Open 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. daily. $5, adults; $4.50, seniors; $2, children 16 and younger. 5 Copper Queen Plaza. (520) 432-7071. www.bisbeemuseum.org.

**Muheim Heritage House Museum:** Guided tours take visitors through the 19th-century home that was built for Joseph and Carmelita Muheim. Open 10 A.M. to 4 P.M., Friday to Tuesday. $2 donation. 207 Youngblood Hill. (520) 432-7698.

**Copper Queen Mine Underground Tour and Lavender Open Pit Mine Tour:** Led by former Bisbee miners, the underground Copper Queen tours last approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes and start at 9 A.M., 10:30 A.M., NOON, 2 P.M., and 3:30 P.M. Dress warmly for your trip on the mine train, since the mine's depths stay at 47 degrees. The underground tour is $12 plus tax, adults; $5 plus tax, ages 4 to 15; and free, children under 4. Reservations are suggested. After exploring the Copper Queen Mine, visitors can tour the massive Lavender Open Pit Mine. The 13-mile narrated van tour takes visitors to the 1,000-foot-deep, 300-acre mine; departure times are 10:30 A.M., NOON, 2 P.M., and 3:30 P.M. Van tours are $10 plus tax per person; children under 4 are free. Tours leave from the Queen Mine Tour Building located immediately south of Old Bisbee's business district, off the State Route 80 interchange. (520) 432-2071 or (866) 432-2071. www.cityofbisbee.com/queenminetours.htm.

**Old Bisbee Repertory Theater:** In a converted early 1900s church in the Historic District, you can enjoy an afternoon high tea or an evening at the theater. On weekends, high tea is served from 3 P.M. to 5 P.M. Dinner theater begins at 5 P.M., with performances starting at 7:30 P.M. Call for reservations and prices. 94 Main St. (520) 432-9064 or (520) 234-6732; www.bisbeerep.com.

—Evelyn Howell

## KING BEE

**Local musician Buzz Pearson plays it cool in Bisbee's Royal Mansion, a 33-foot 1951 Spartan trailer. The Royal Mansion is one of many themed classic trailers available for overnight stays at the famous Shady Dell RV Park. With the mansion's vintage music accessories and funky decor, Pearson, known for his brand of blues and "funky soul," is right at home. Buzz and The Soul Senders perform frequently throughout southeastern Arizona.**

Nelson came to Bisbee several years ago with her husband. She got involved with the Women's Transition Project to help address the lack of a shelter or treatment facility for women in Cochise County.

"I joined the board," Sterbick-Nelson says, "and decided to write grants. The WTP provides a transitional home for single women and women with children, most of whom have been victims of homelessness, domestic violence and substance abuse."

The WTP provides the women with housing and the opportunity to get back on their feet emotionally and financially. All net profits from gallery sales go to the WTP.





Seventy percent of the artists represented are local. The high quality of the work, the way the light spills in the front windows and the homemade sweets she keeps on hand, all contribute to a soothing and inspirational atmosphere. "I love it here," Sterbick-Nelson says. "It is a holy place."

George Bellinger meets both criteria of the quintessential Bisbee citizen. He is an artist and a retiree—after a career as a designer and painter. Of retirement he says, "I've lived in Los Angeles and Paris, but I've never been busier in my life." He lives high on the hillside overlooking Brewery Gulch in a small house once occupied by Cornish hard-rock miners. The steps to his house, like every other home in Old Bisbee, are many and steep. Lumber is stacked on his porch. He plans to expand.

He first came to Bisbee seven years ago with a friend whose hobby is to experience fine dining around the world. His friend read somewhere that Cafe Roka in Bisbee is the best dining experience in the Southwest. They came to Bisbee and ate at the restaurant. "I remember thinking, 'Interesting. The countryside looks slightly European, but not quite. I wonder who lives here?' And that was the end of it."

Six years later, his son called him to say he and his wife were living on 13 acres in southern Arizona and were planning to adopt a child. Would George be interested in moving nearby to play "grandpapa?"

"'Find me an interesting place to live nearby,' I told him," George says. "He said, 'What about Bisbee?' and I said, 'No, no, no. Bisbee is over the hill and over the dale.'"

Finally, George agreed to the move and asked his son to find him a miner's shack with running water, heat and an indoor toilet. "The second day I was here, I went on my porch, and there were irises and chocolate chip cookies and other assorted things to welcome me to this place. Who are these people?"

Now he knows. "I walk down to the post office to get my mail, and it takes me two hours. Everybody seems to know everybody. This is a community in the extraordinary sense of that word. This is an American community, albeit made up of disparate parts from everywhere. It is the most diverse place that I have ever lived."

Ralph Rattelmueller agrees. "It's the most wonderful community I've ever lived in my life. My favorite definition of community I read in some other book: 'A community is any group of people that cares more about each other than they have to.' It's not about people holding each other accountable, like in so much of suburban America. We hold ourselves accountable, and we help each other out."

Even a single visit to Bisbee leaves an indelible mark. Whether it's a night spent in the Tiki Bus at the Shady Dell vintage trailer park, or fried chicken for lunch at Dot's Diner, or a performance by the Bisbee Community Chorus, mention Bisbee to others, and those who know will try to explain that Bisbee is both a place and a state of mind. Now, for us, when someone asks us the same question, we can tell what we know or heed the sign and "STOP trying." AH

*Tom Carpenter lives in Flagstaff, but yearns for a Bisbee state of mind.*

*David Zickl of Fountain Hills got swarmed and took a stinger on the chin while photographing Reed Booth, the Killer Bee Guy, for this story.*

Crossing the finish line in downtown Bisbee. MARTY CORDANO

## BISBEE COASTER RACE

Bisbee offers one of the best small-town Fourth of July celebrations in the Southwest, but don't plan on driving down Main Street first thing in the morning, unless you're between the ages of 9 and 16 and behind the steering wheel of a gravity-powered coaster.

The Bisbee Coaster Race begins at the east end of town, at the underpass to State Route 80, at an elevation of 5,650 feet, winds down through Tombstone Canyon and ends near the post office on Main Street, elevation 5,350 feet. With a 300-foot drop in 1.5 miles, racers can reach 50 mph in a little over 2.5 minutes.

Started in 1914, the Bisbee Coaster Race has had its ups and downs during the ensuing decades, but since 1993 it has been an annual event that attracts thousands of spectators to watch the exhilarating race down Main Street.

Information: www.bisbeemarquee.com/www/0501/004.php. —Tom Carpenter

## when you go


**Location:** Bisbee is approximately 90 miles southeast of Tucson.
**Getting There:** From Tucson take Interstate 10 to Benson. Take Exit 303 onto State Route 80 south approximately 49 miles, through Tombstone to Bisbee.
**Lodging:** Canyon Rose Suites, toll-free, (866) 296-7673; www.canyonrose.com.; Copper Queen Hotel, (520) 432-2216; www.copperqueen.com.; Shady Dell RV Park, (520) 432-3567; www.theshadydell.com.; School House Inn B&B, toll-free, (800) 537-4333; www.virtualcities.com/ons/az/b/azb4501.htm.
**Dining:** Cafe Roka, (520) 432-5153; www.caferoka.com; Hot Licks Barbecue and Blues Saloon, (520) 432-7200.
**Additional Information:** www.bisbeemarquee.com.



by Clint Van Winkle illustration by Joseph Daniel Fiedler

# A Ground-pounder Gives Thumbs Up to a Biplane Ride

WHAT AM I DOING HERE? I am so afraid of heights that I often sedate myself for commercial flights. Yet, here I am loosely strapped into one of the holes of a red biplane, taxiing down a dirt runway.

The wheels pull up from the desert floor, and we rise into the clear southern Arizona sky. Larry, the pilot, says it is a good day for flying, but I imagine he feeds all his patrons that line. He also mentions something about how I can pick my thrill level: One thumb up means I'm having fun, two thumbs up means he should make it even more exciting. Not likely. Just flying in a straight line at 100 mph in an 80-year-old biplane sounds like all the excitement I can stand.

Despite my qualms, flying is in my blood. A yellowed newspaper clipping details how my great-great-great-grandmother, Jane Uppington Langley, celebrated her 90th birthday in 1929 with a flight in an open-cockpit biplane much like the one I'd strapped myself into (except mine's a relic, hers was brand new). Other clippings document the subsequent flights she took over the next seven years and the fuss she made that her sons refused to fly.

The only other jarhead in the family besides ground-loving me was also a pilot—my great-uncle, Bob Scott. He delighted in flying right up until his death a year ago, enjoying the clouds and the freedom that comes with soaring high above the landscape.

So, with the propeller rumbling and my nerves restless, I take some comfort in imagining that Bob and Jane might be watching over me.

Suddenly, I am Frank Luke and Eddie Rickenbacker rolled into one, soaring through the desert sky and inhaling a new perspective on life.

Medal of Honor recipient and Phoenix native Frank Luke Jr., for whom Luke Air Force Base is named, shot down four airplanes and 14 German balloons in a 17-day spree during World War I. The feat earned Luke the nickname "Arizona Balloon Buster" and made him the Ace of all American Aces, second only to Rickenbacker. However, Luke died shortly after his illustrious piloting career began. I only hoped that Larry and I would have better luck than Luke and make it from runway to runway in one piece. Or, at least alive.

Something gets into me a few minutes later, however. I think it is courage. Maybe it is just stupidity. In any case, I put first one, then two thumbs in the air.

"What did I do that for?" I mumble immediately.

"It's okay," replies Uncle Bob in my head.

Larry acknowledges my psychotic moment by graciously executing a maneuver I can only describe as the hold-onto-your-butt death dive—a nose-down half-spiral that hurls the plane at the ground. I try to yell the ground away, but it doesn't help. The desert floor races toward me.

What was I thinking? What made my thumbs stick up? What made me crawl into this archaic contraption?

Miraculously, we level off and fly across Yuma, passing over perfectly manicured date farms jutting from the desert and the border town of Algodones, Mexico. Larry waggles the wings, like he said he would, as we fly over an intaglio. The desert drawing, known as Intaglio Man, gives me a thumbs up sign. Helplessly, I follow suit and give Larry two thumbs again. He obliges with a series of terrifying twists and turns. For some inexplicable reason, I pump my foolish thumbs several more times, drunk on adrenaline.

Forty-five minutes later, Larry eases the red biplane onto the dirt runway with a landing that's smoother than any commercial flight I've ever sweated through. After taxiing a short distance to Tillamook Air Tours' roadside stand, I climb out a changed person. I'm addicted and want to go up again. I want to wear the leather helmet until it dry rots atop my bald head and flies away into the wind.

Unfortunately, my budget won't allow it.

So, I unstrap the leather helmet, take off the goggles and brown bomber jacket and walk away—but, only because I must.

Before leaving the airport, I watch the red biplane climb into the sky again. As the plane flies overhead, I almost see my Grandma Jane put two thumbs in the sky. Uncle Bob obliges and they go looping off into the cloudless blue sky—leaving me with only the memory of our recent flight together and the hope that one day descendants of my own will muster enough courage to climb in, take off and throw two thumbs to the wind. AH

## when you go

**Location:** Somerton Airport, 10 miles southwest of Yuma, on U.S. Route 95.
**Additional Information:** Tillamook Air Tours, (928) 941-4964.

photograph by Steve Bruno
by John Rodgers

# Atop Table Top Mountain

## A flat, winding path and a rock staircase climb to reveal a windswept vista

online Before you go on this hike, visit arizonahighways.com for other things to do and places to see in this area. You'll also find more hikes in our archive.

IN THE CLEAR AIR OF DAWN a mile and a half uptrail, weatherworn ranges and valleys emerge from the shadows, counterpointing a panorama to the far horizon. For uncounted millennia, these ridges and peaks have yielded to the power of gravity and time. Carved by a leisurely exfoliation and buried in their own *bajadas*, they are unmoved by the huddled lights of two Tohono O'odham villages shining from tucks in the hills.

A gathering of friends set out by starlight from camp, beneath the long scrolling tail of Scorpius, on the trail that crawls across the southwest face of Table Top Mountain. This wilderness lies within a corner of the vast but little-known Sonoran Desert National Monument, a beautiful desolation of volcanic peaks and serpentine arroyos south of Interstate 8 between Tucson and Phoenix.

Toward the end of the 16-mile dirt road that leaves Interstate 8 and climbs out of the Vekol Valley, the landscape sheds the centuries to reveal a richer, more pristine version of the cattle-trodden lower flats. Lush, upland plants mingle with desert-varnished basalt and intricate mosaics of desert pavement. Mockingbirds stand alert on saguaros; ravens sweep the cliff and canyon; and flitting phainopeplas pluck insects from the air. Beneath the dark heights of Table Top Mountain, the road circles through a campground containing three sites with picnic tables and fire rings and a roofed brick structure enclosing a toilet.

**TABLE DECORATIONS**
**A saguaro forest greets hikers as they climb the Table Top Mountain trail. The hardy saguaro cactus has an average lifespan of 150 to 175 years and can grow to 40 feet tall.**

From the campground, the 3.5-mile trail to the summit of Table Top Mountain begins inside a gate and follows a flat, winding track through green stands of chainfruit cholla, saguaro cacti and foothills paloverde trees. The yellow blooms of creosote bushes and brittlebushes and the clustered red-orange flowers of ocotillos fire their color against the eroded hills of black basalt.

At the half-mile mark, the trail crosses a small wash and meanders up a ridge. A mile farther, beyond ancient ironwood trees in a trenched wash, the gradient increases. At 2.2 miles, a challenging section begins, a staircase of rocks embedded in caliche creates a miniature arroyo carved by boots and running water. From here to the top, vistas open up on all sides.

At 2.6 miles, on the far side of a rugged washed-out area of red shale, the final climb unfolds with a series of switchbacks. A chimney of basalt rises there on the north side of the trail, an aerie to the peregrine falcon that soars high above. With rain, these upper slopes support globemallows, penstemons and the blue efflorescence of larkspurs, as well as yuccas and century plants. The last section passes ancient 3-foot-high stone walls of unknown origin before wandering onto the 4,356-foot peak. From this 40-acre saddle it is possible to view the Santa Catalinas, Baboquivari, the Superstitions and a score of other ranges.

Relax on the return trip and let your eyes sweep across the stark beauty of this vast windblown vista; behold the slow motion of rock forever shedding itself, grain by grain, across the eons. AH


## trail tips

**Length:** 3.5 miles.
**Elevation Gain:** 2,057 feet.
**Difficulty:** Moderate.
**Payoff:** Views of the Santa Catalina, Baboquivari and Superstition mountain ranges.
**Location:** 93 miles northwest of Tucson; 80 miles south of Phoenix.
**Getting There:** From Tucson: Drive north on Interstate 10 to Interstate 8 and go west about 28 miles to Exit 144. The 15-mile drive south from Exit 144 is marked by small arrows on slender 4-foot signs at several junctures. Keep right at the first fork, at about 2.1 miles. At 7.8 miles, wind past an old barn and continue south. The surface turns rough beginning at the 11.8-mile turnoff to the left, marked by a corral and yellow cattle crossing. Stay right from there to the campground and trailhead. From Phoenix: South on I-10, to I-8 and go about 28 miles west to Exit 144. Proceed the same as from Tucson.
**Travel Advisory:** To reach the trailhead, a high-clearance vehicle is necessary. Always carry plenty of water, at least 1 gallon per day per person. Hike this trail in early spring, fall and winter. The trail is virtually impassable in wet weather.
**Additional Information:** Arizona Bureau of Land Management, (623) 580-5500; www.blm.gov/az/rec/tabletop.htm.

photographs by George Stocking
by Tom Kuhn

# In Hot Water

## Agua Caliente Road Winds Past Agate Fields, Rock Art and a Ghost Town to a Closed Hotel Once Known for Thermal Mineral Springs

**AGATE HAVEN**
**The sun rises over saguaro cacti and paloverde trees that dot the foothills of the Gila Bend Mountains along Agua Caliente Road. The area is popular with rock hounds searching for agates near Fourth of July Butte.**

HEAT WAVES FROM THE afternoon sun bounced back from the bone-white adobe walls of the former Agua Caliente Hotel. The heat reached under the carport roof where Coit Hughes, 82, of Phoenix, a retired real estate lawyer, farm owner and scion of an Arizona pioneer political family, explained why he still lavished money on the old place.

"I keep it up because I don't want it to go away," he said of the once-popular geothermal spa where foreigners and the famous soaked in mineral springs. Arizona's first governor, George W.P. Hunt, was a guest. So were Buffalo Bill Cody and lots of Army officers after the hotel was commandeered during World War II.

"This is a place where all the politicians going to Yuma stopped," including his father, Coit Inges Hughes, he recalled. Opened in 1897, the 22-room hotel closed after farm wells pumped its thermal springs dry.

"I retaliated by drilling wells and drying up their wells," Hughes said with a smile. Now hot water flows again at 110 degrees, but he has no plan to reopen.

Today the town of Agua Caliente is considered a desert curiosity destination for those seeking back-road adventure and uncommon sights. It represents one understated high point of a 200-mile loop that begins at Phoenix on Interstate 10 and snakes through sparse Sonoran Desert, past abandoned mines, spectacular geology and strange rock art near the mining ghost town of Sundad.

Leave Interstate 10 at the Buckeye Exit 112, drive 5.8 miles south on State Route 85 and turn west onto Hazen Road, also signed Old Highway 80. Drive 4 miles to Hassayampa, then 6 miles to Arlington, and 5.4 miles to the signed turnoff for the Agua Caliente Road. At .6 of a mile, bear right onto the graded nearly all-dirt road that mostly travels through U.S. Bureau of Land Management public lands, and poses no problem for low-clearance vehicles.

About 9.5 miles after leaving pavement, Agua Caliente Road crosses the Southern Pacific tracks and turns westward through sparse paloverde and creosote bush desert. Have water and a good spare tire onboard.

A large rusty storage tank 6 miles beyond the rail crossing marks the location of the abandoned Dixie Mine. The surrounding area is popular with rock hounds looking for agates, but avoid the open shafts.

Mark and Melanie Hoffmeyer of Mesa, both former Air Force noncoms, started before the heat and by midmorning, had collected a bottleful of the oddly marked stones. "Our goal," said Mark, "is to create a lamp with sliced agate."

Beyond the agate fields, 1,358-foot Fourth of July Butte, reportedly named by picnickers in the 1890s, and 2,215-foot Yellow Medicine Butte—both part of the Gila Bend Mountain chain—present prominent landmarks. Agua Caliente Road travels through low mountain curves, gaining 300 feet of elevation through Yellow Medicine Butte Pass, then loses 500 feet as it settles back into the low desert.

Watch on the south side of the road 18.1 miles past Fourth of July Butte for modern rock art comprised of a large anchor, star, cross and circles where a 1.5-mile four-wheel-drive side road leads to the ghost town of Sundad. Some crumbled foundations and a shaft remain. Tailings are visible from the road.

Montezuma Head, the most striking landmark around, lies southeast of Sundad. The "head" appears as a monolithic sculpture chiseled into 1,863-foot Face Mountain.

From Sundad, the road descends into the Hyder Valley farming district. At just a little over 5 miles, turn left (south) at 555th Avenue. Continue 4.6 miles past the jojoba farms to Hyder Road, across the railroad tracks. Turn right (west) and drive approximately 4.3 miles to 76th Avenue East, a paved road that runs south over the saddle of Agua Caliente Mountain, and into the town of Agua Caliente.

**SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK**
**Built of local lava rock, the longstanding schoolhouse sits empty in the old settlement of Agua Caliente.**

Once in Agua Caliente, remain on the pavement for 1.2 miles, past a sprinkling of houses. An old one-room schoolhouse built of local lava rock sits on one side of the road and the Agua Caliente Hotel, the largest building around, on the other. Both are on Hughes' private property, where trespassers are discouraged.

Some guidebooks list Agua Caliente as a ghost town, but that's only partly true. The town straddles the line between Yuma and Maricopa counties. That was an important difference when one county's drinking laws were more liberal than the other's. The Yuma side is lived in. Most of the hotel and the ghost town repose in Maricopa County.

The road passes by the hotel and in .2 of a mile reaches the scattering of old foundations and dilapidated walls that mark the remains of old Agua

**PEACEFUL PIONEERS**
**The Agua Caliente Pioneer Cemetery appears forlorn along the road heading out of town.**

Caliente. The Agua Caliente Pioneer Cemetery, in use since the 1890s, still accepts new arrivals, but the deserted town offers no services beyond those offered by good Samaritans.

About .6 of a mile past the hotel, turn right (south) and drive for 8 miles on Agua Caliente Road, a paved road that crosses the usually dry Gila River to Sentinel, where services and fuel are available at Exit 87 on Interstate 8. On the way, you'll cross the Sentinel Plain Lava Flow, a broad tumble of lava boulders—the largest lava flow in Arizona. Explorer Juan Bautista de Anza, the first European to discover a backcountry route between Mexico and California, followed the Gila River near the Agua Caliente area in 1775.

At Sentinel, the loop drive returns to Interstate speed. But consider adding 21 more miles round-trip and an extra hour by leaving I-8 at Exit 102, and traveling north on Painted Rocks Road to see the prehistoric petroglyph field at Painted Rocks, a pay campground maintained by the Bureau of Land Management. One of the best archaeological sites in the state, it offers shaded picnic tables, water and toilets.

Back on I-8, continue east to Gila Bend, where services and lodging are available, and then drive 37 miles north on State 85 back to I-10 and east into Phoenix. Plan a 10-hour day for this trip.

On the way to Agua Caliente, you'll ride the gold road to old mines, and it won't be hard to imagine the likes of Buffalo Bill Cody rocking on the porch of the old Agua Caliente Hotel, a stone's throw from where conquistadores trekked into history. AH

**HOT ROCK**
**The Sentinel Plain Lava Flow, the largest in Arizona, lies along Agua Caliente Road. The massive flow brimmed from a volcano less than 2 million years ago during the Pleistocene Epoch.**

## travel tips

**Vehicle Requirements:** Two-wheel drive, low clearance okay.
**Warning:** Beware of poisonous reptiles. Carry plenty of water; October through April offers the coolest weather for this drive. Avoid abandoned mine shafts, and carry a spare tire and a shovel. Map the route, and check road and weather conditions before making the drive. Don't travel alone, and let someone know your plans. Odometer readings in the story may vary.

## route finder

*Note: Mileages are approximate.*

> **From Phoenix**, drive west on Interstate 10 to Buckeye Exit 112.

> **Turn left** (south) onto State Route 85 and drive 5 miles to Hazen Road (also marked Old Highway 80). Turn right (west) and follow the road for 4 miles to Hassayampa and another 6 miles to Arlington. Pass the small town of Arlington and drive 5.4 miles to Agua Caliente Road.

> **Turn right** onto Agua Caliente Road and go .6 of a mile, where the pavement ends; bear right onto the graded road.

> **After 9.5 miles** on the graded road, the road crosses the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks. Another 6 miles beyond the tracks, a rusted tank along the side of the road marks the old Dixie Mine.

> **Continue along the road** for another 18 miles through a series of small mountain curves to the rough road (marked by white rocks formed in the shapes of an anchor, cross and star) that leads to Sundad. Continue for another 5 miles to 555th Avenue and turn left (south); follow for 4.6 miles to Hyder Road, just across the railroad tracks. Turn right and drive 4.3 miles to 76th Avenue East and turn left.

> **Follow this road** through the mountain pass into Agua Caliente, passing the old schoolhouse, hotel and cemetery. Drive approximately another mile to Agua Caliente Road and turn right following the road for another 8 miles to Interstate 8 at Sentinel.

> **Follow I-8 for 28 miles** to Gila Bend and State 85. Drive north on 85 for 37 miles to I-10. Drive east to Phoenix to complete the loop.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